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Tasty

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Printmaking

Art and Design

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## Tasty

This body of work touches on subjects pertaining to kitsch, class, femininity, and the home. "Tasty" embodies, glorifies and celebrates the power of women as consumers and homemakers. While it explores the working-class décor of kitsch and taste, it also shines a light on a hidden beauty most might not have originally seen within the objects.

When using kitsch it automatically provokes a discussion of class and taste. In my work I reference William Morris's designs. He inspired me with his ideas of designs and production of home décor, and with his ideas towards honoring the working class with affordable, well-made and designed furnishings. He wanted to improve the working class's lifestyle, workspace and within the home. He wanted the working class to be able to obtain similar possessions as the middle and upper class. By mass-producing home décor, such as wallpaper and home furnishings, they would be more affordable. The chalkware figures and other home décor I use within my work are a strong examples of products based on a higher idea that carry symbols from previous historic periods. Once they were made accessible by mass production and marketed to the working class, this removed their symbolic power. Though the quality has been weakened, and they do not hold the original intent of the objects or ideas they are based on, and the aesthetic has shifted, they still hold power and beauty.

The majority of the show consists of the wooden shadow boxes that house drawings and sculptures. The design of the boxes is based on shelves I saw in the Harem within the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. The shelves were built into the walls and the shapes of the opening of the shelves were as decorative as the tiles and mosaics that surrounded them. Empty, they looked like small dark windows set all over the room. Studying them I wondered what beautiful objects once made these shelves their home. I brought the idea of this empty, window like shelf back to Canada and placed in them items I might find in homes in North America. Transforming these shelves in time and space created new references within our surroundings, which combed historic, social, and gender-based questions.

The items I have collected are not worth much. Now second-hand objects they once were everyday objects found in many homes. One of the reasons behind the use of second-hand objects is their potential of holding nostalgia. I wanted items someone might find in a grandmother's home or/and in my own, such as fake flowers, ceramic figures with sparkly glazes, cheap flashy glassware, and other kitschy home décor. I wanted to create a new space for them, something that references the home but is removed from it. While the feeling of nostalgia is important, I also wanted to give the objects a new life. By altering the objects, removing them from the home, and creating a new space within the boxes, I hoped to give the viewer a chance to look at the objects with fresh eyes. I want the objects to be noticed and appreciated, not stuck on a shelf with the possibility of being forgotten forever.

One of my interests in these items is the idea of taste and how it changes from one generation to another. My own parents find some of my grandparent's home décor tasteless, gaudy, and hideous, and they like many others from their generation rejected it. While I do not find my parent's taste tasteless, I find it lacking something, either humor or glitz, or both. I have rejected their taste and instead I have embraced my grandparents' generation's taste, demonstrating a kind of repetition or re-visiting of past tastes and trends.

The taste of my grandparents' generation belongs to the working class. The working class of my grandparents' generation believed that "more is better." As the working class's income was rising and they were moving to the suburbs with the middle-class, designers and marketing teams thought their taste would evolve to that of the middle class's clean, modern, and functional. To their surprise the working class held tight to their working-class taste. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the distinction of taste is that it has to do with social status and education more than anything else. We develop our taste from a very young age, taught by our surrounding elders. It's like a habit hard to break, if it's breakable at all. The only change was their spending power. With higher incomes the working class was able to afford things it never could before, like refrigerators and new cars, but if they were going to spend their hard earned money they wanted more bang for their buck. They wanted large fenders, bright coloured fridges with chrome handles, and shiny glitzy décor, not clean functional designs like their middle-class neighbours. Since the working-class woman's day was filled with household duties she wanted a cheerful bright setting something she could be proud of.

An obvious visual connection within the works is their feminine quality. It is not just the colour, the glitter, the eyelashes, or nails. It is the sense of home. Women have traditionally been homemakers. In charge of making a house their home, tending to the household needs, and taking care of the family. Even today as women have stepped out of the house and become independent, a majority of them have continued

the role as homemaker. On occasion when people visit my studio, their reaction is "my mother had that," or "my grandmother had that," always giving the object a feminine owner.

As a woman there are expectations that most women feel a need to fulfill, such as the idea that we need to look and present ourselves in a certain way. We end up altering our surroundings and ourselves; it may be small and temporary, or a painful permanent alteration. Though my alterations to my objects might be small and seem strictly decorative, they are not far off from what women do to their own faces on a daily basis. I changed the eye color of a bird like a woman puts on colored contacts; I created pouty shiny red lips on fish like a woman applies lipstick. I believe women have similar motivations, my intention of stripping the everydayness from my objects. They want to be noticed and appreciated more than if they are just some everyday object. These objects altered or untouched, designed and shifted over time, yearn for a mind to embrace them, so they may live again.

Alexa Mietz

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**Education:**

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**Exhibitions:**

Tasty, University of Alberta's FAB Gallery,  
Edmonton, AB, November 2011

In Between Surfaces, SNAP Studio Gallery,  
Edmonton, AB, April 2010.

B.F.A Exhibition, Sonoma State Art Gallery,  
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Student Juried Show, Sonoma State Art Gallery,  
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Print Affair, SNAP, Edmonton, AB, November 2010

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Schmoozy, Latitude 53 Contemporary Visual Culture, Edmonton, AB, Canada, December 2010

### Publications:

"Sparkle and Fade", Carolyn Jervis, Vue Weekly, #840, November 24- November 30 2011,  
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[www.bunnywax.wordpress.com/2007/04/page/2/](http://www.bunnywax.wordpress.com/2007/04/page/2/)

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T.A Fundamentals, Summer 2010, University of Alberta, Professor Matt Arrigo

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T.A Fundamentals, Fall 2009, University of Alberta,  
Professor Daniela Schluter

T.A Beginning Printmaking, Spring 2008, Sonoma  
State, Professor Kurt Kemp

T.A Beginning Printmaking, Fall 2008, Sonoma State,  
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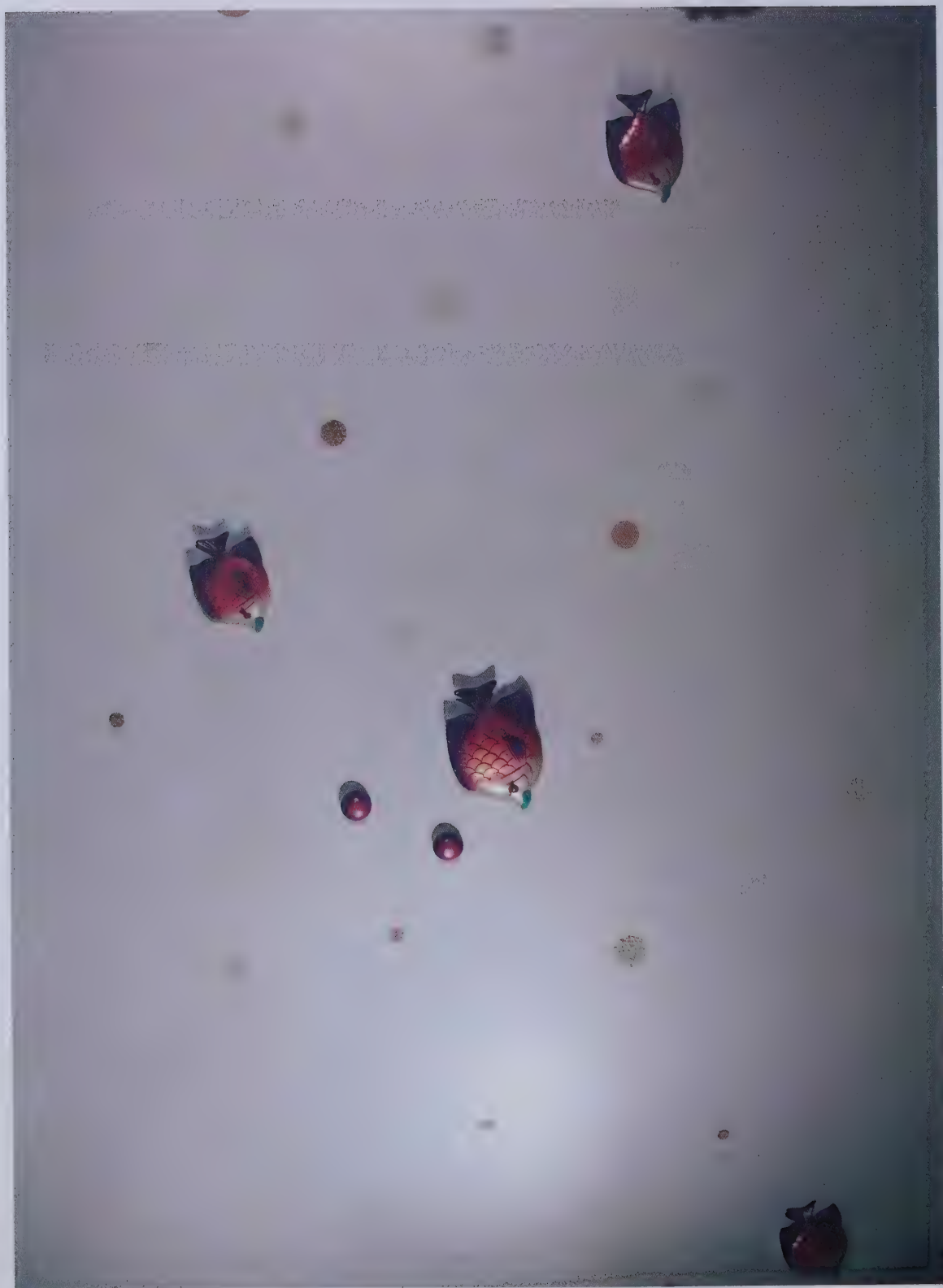
T.A Beginning Printmaking, Spring 2007, Sonoma  
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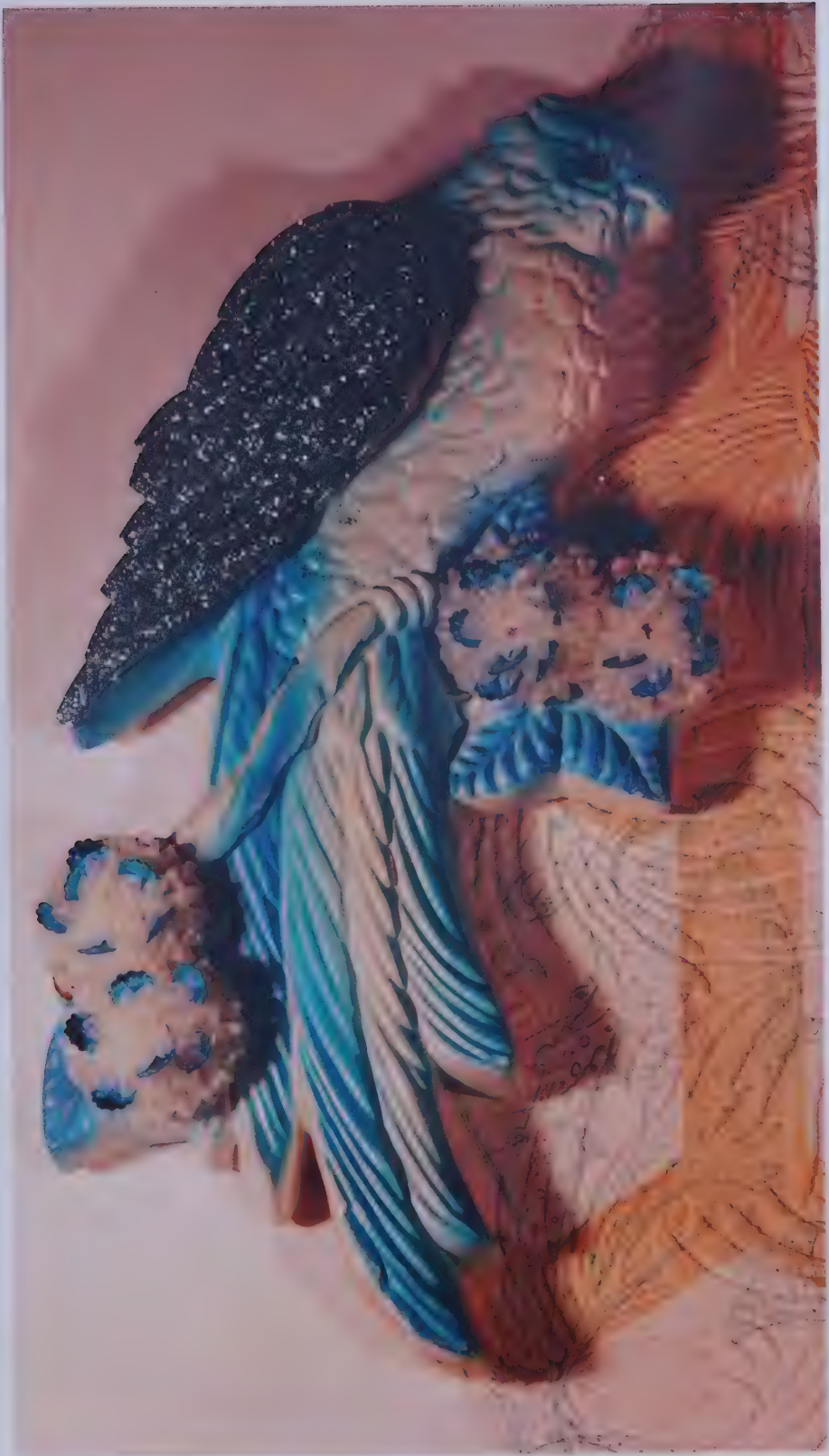




























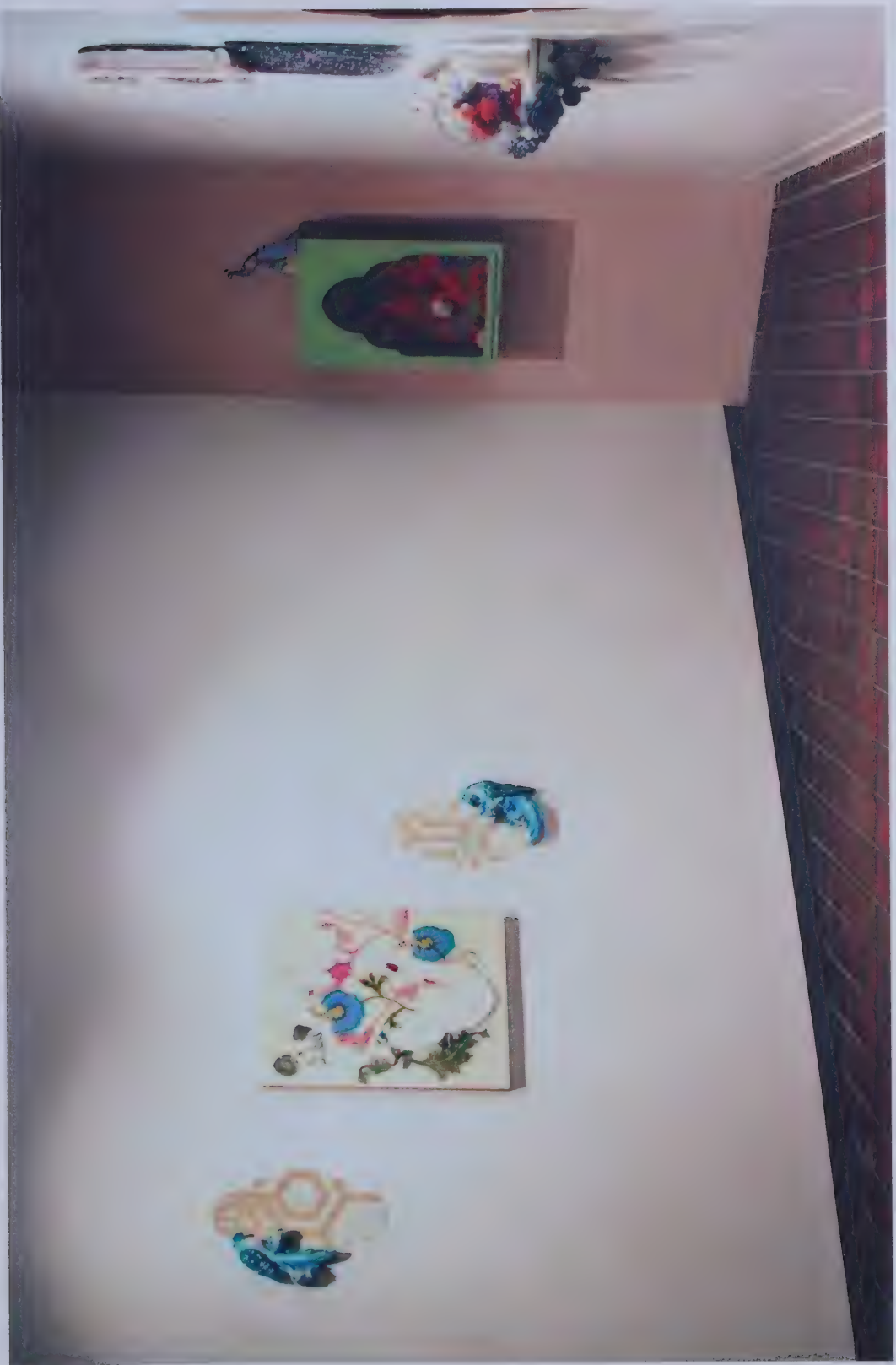


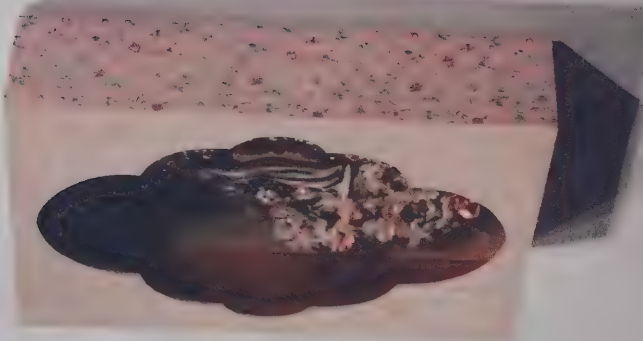












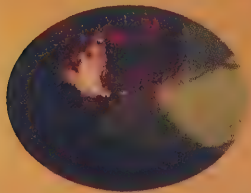


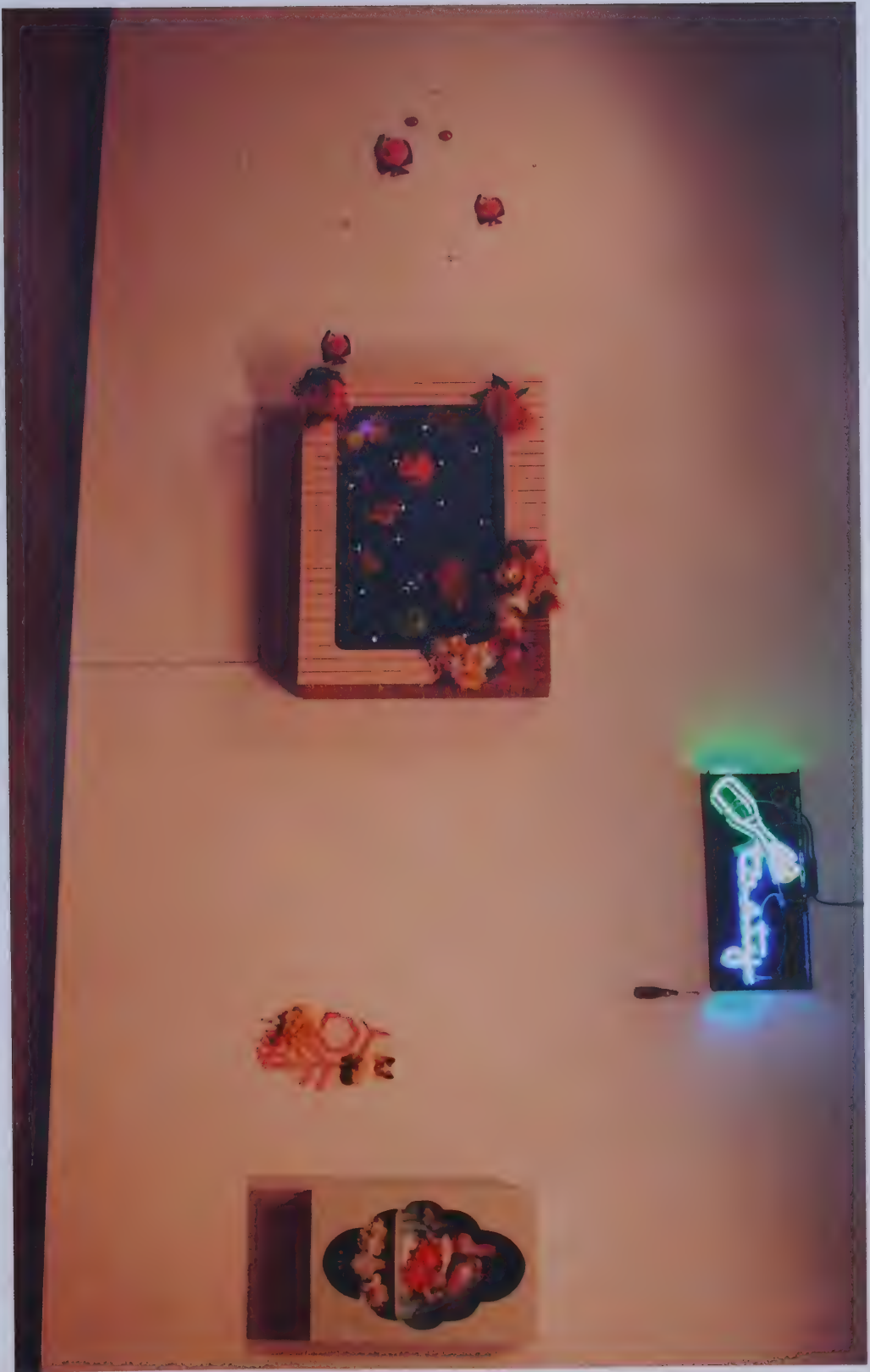


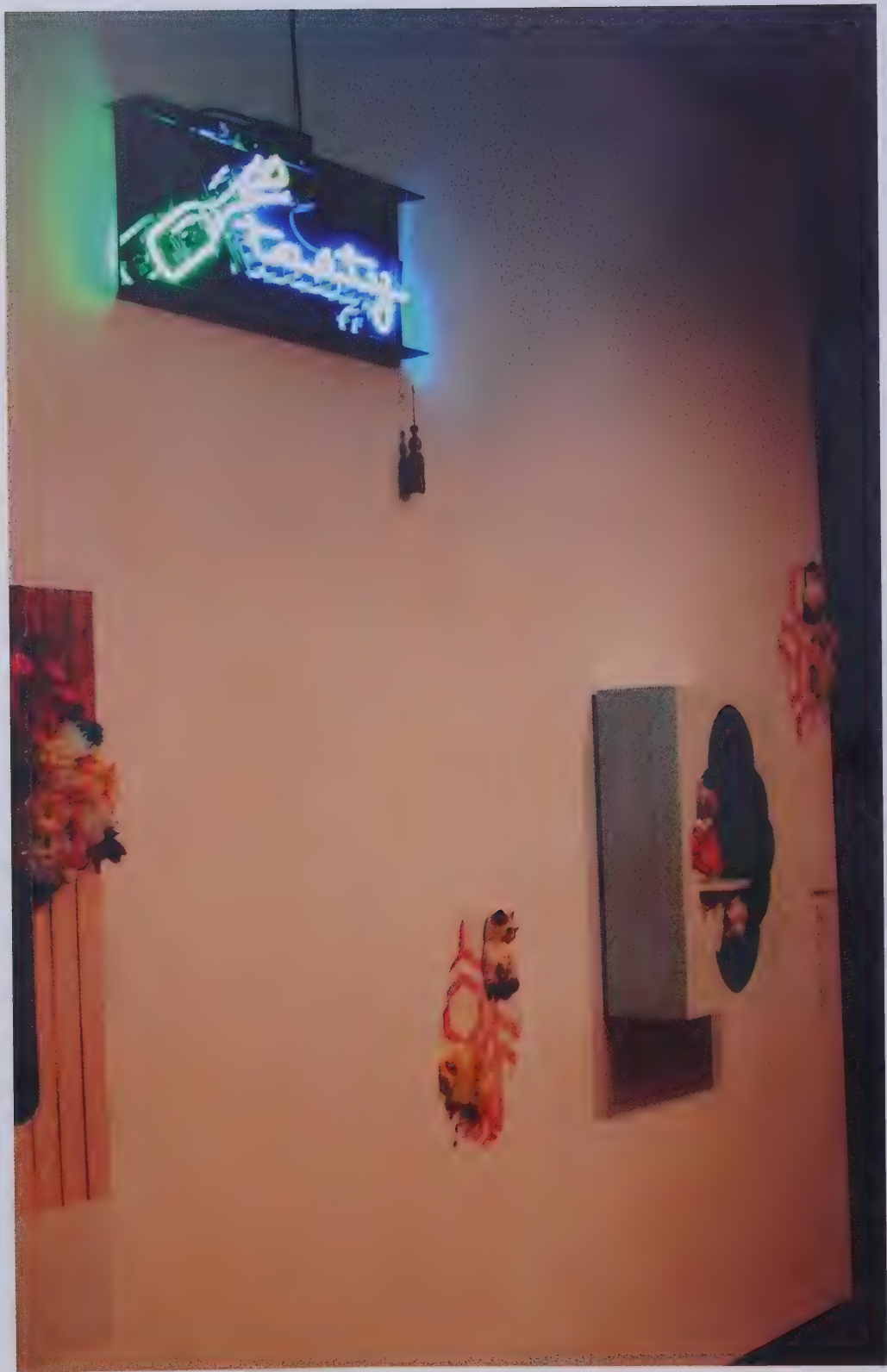
















Mietz.1

2011

Tea for Two

Chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, acrylic fingernails, wallpaper, fake flowers, sand, resin, seashells, fishhooks, glass and plastic crystals, and led lights.

10'x4'

Mietz.2

2011

Tea for Two

Chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, acrylic fingernails, wallpaper, fake flowers, sand, resin, seashells, fishhooks, glass and plastic crystals, and led lights.

10'x4'

Mietz.3

2011

Tea for Two (detail)

Chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, acrylic fingernails, wallpaper, fake flowers, sand, resin, seashells, fishhooks, glass and plastic crystals, and led lights.

10'x4'

Mietz.4

2011

Hey Lover Bird

Ceramic figure, fake flowers, false eyelashes, acrylic fingernails, acrylic paint, pen, and wallpaper.

20"x30"

Mietz.5

2011

Hey Lover Bird (side view)

Ceramic figure, fake flowers, false eyelashes, acrylic fingernails, acrylic paint, pen, and wallpaper.

20"x30"

Mietz.6

2011

Wink and a Smile #1

Wallpaper, aquatint, chalkware, acrylic paint, glitter, and false eyelashes.

6"x12"

Mietz.7

2011

Wink and a Smile #2

Wallpaper, aquatint, chalkware, acrylic paint, glitter, and false eyelashes.

6"x12"

Mietz.8

2011

Pink and Lonely

Resin, intaglio, acrylic paint, and pen.

24"x30"

Mietz.9

2011

Wrapped around your Finger

Resin, linoleum embossment, acrylic paint, pen, and glitter.

24"x30"

Mietz.10

2011

Cuckoo

Cuckoo clock, acrylic fingernails, fake flowers, acrylic paint, pen, glitter, ceramic figure, and contact paper.

20"x37"

Mietz.11

2011

Cuckoo (detail)

Cuckoo clock, acrylic fingernails, fake flowers, acrylic paint, pen, glitter, ceramic figure, and contact paper.

20"x37"

Mietz.12

2011

A is for Jeff

Plastic sign letter, acrylic fingernails, false eyelashes tinsel, glass, fake flowers, and ceramic figures.

18"x4'

Mietz.13

2011

Pink, Silver, and Gold all Over

Resin, embossed paper with gold leaf, glass, glitter, fake flowers, plastic pearls, contact paper and wallpaper.

20"x30"

Mietz.13

2011

Easy Breezy

Ceramic clock, chalkware, acrylic fingernails, false eyelashes, fake flowers, acrylic paint, pen, chandelier crystals, glass, tinsel, glitter, plastic eggs, and wallpaper.

20"x30"

Mietz.14

2011

Shake your Tail Feathers #1

Wallpaper, intaglio, aquatint, chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, and acrylic fingernails.

6"x12"

Mietz.15

2011

Shake your Tail Feathers #1 (detail)

Wallpaper, intaglio, aquatint, chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, and acrylic fingernails.

6"x12"

Mietz.16

2011

Cut it out

Resin, acrylic paint, pen, linoleum embossment, intaglio, and aquatint.

24"x30"

Mietz.17

2011

Shake your Tail Feathers #2

Wallpaper, intaglio, aquatint, chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, and acrylic fingernails.

6"x12"

Mietz.18

2011

Shake your Tail Feathers #2 (detail)

Wallpaper, intaglio, aquatint, chalkware, glitter, false eyelashes, and acrylic fingernails.

6"x12"

Mietz.19

2011

That Lady is a Tramp

Resin, glitter, false eyelashes, chalkware, glass, tiles, and wallpaper

3'x3'

Mietz.20

2011

That Lady is a Tramp (detail)

Resin, glitter, false eyelashes, chalkware, glass, tiles, and wallpaper

3'x3'

Mietz.21

2011

Curtain Call

Lobster tail, glitter, glass, fake flowers, plastic placemat, and wallpaper.

3'x3'

Mietz.22

2011

Curtain Call (detail)

Lobster tail, glitter, glass, fake flowers, plastic placemat, and wallpaper.

3'x3'

Mietz.23

2011

Frenchie Flamingo

Resin, glitter, plastic flamingo, plastic shrimp, acrylic paint, pen, fake plants, bumblebee, acrylic fingernails, false eyelashes, and wallpaper.

4'x6'

Mietz.24

2011

Frenchie Flamingo (detail)

Resin, glitter, plastic flamingo, plastic shrimp, acrylic paint, pen, fake plants, bumblebee, acrylic fingernails, false eyelashes, and wallpaper.

4'x6'

Mietz.25

2011

Frenchie Flamingo (detail)

Resin, glitter, plastic flamingo, plastic shrimp, acrylic paint, pen, fake plants, bumblebee, acrylic fingernails, false eyelashes, and wallpaper.

4'x6'

Mietz.26

2011

Pinkie La Rue

Intaglio, aquatint, and wallpaper

24"x36"

Mietz.27  
2011  
Black and Blue  
Intaglio, aquatint, and wallpaper  
24"x36"

Mietz.28  
2011  
Wrapped around your Finger with color chart  
Resin, linoleum embossment, acrylic paint, pen, and glitter.  
24"x30"

Mietz.29  
Install shot

Mietz.30  
Install shot

Mietz.31  
Install shot

Mietz.32  
Install shot

Mietz.33  
Install shot

Mietz.34  
Install shot

Mietz.35  
Install shot

Mietz.36  
Install shot

Mietz.37  
Install shot

Mietz.38  
Install shot

Mietz.39  
Install shot









